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Sony slashing 6 1/2% of staff

Roughly 450 people will be affected by layoffs

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In the latest round of layoffs to hit Hollywood, Sony Pictures Entertainment is slashing its workforce by 6 1/2%.

Last year, the studio trimmed its staff by 300 people through a combination of pinkslips and eliminating open positions. And just last week, Sony announced that several high-level execs from its home entertainment and IT divisions were being let go.

The studio began notifying the roughly 450 people who will be affected by the latest round of layoffs on Monday. Most of the pinkslips will be handed out by the first week in March.

A Sony insider said the layoffs are expected to span a range of personnel, including senior-level executives.

In addition, about 100 currently open positions are expected to remain unfilled.

"The decision to take this step was difficult," Sony toppers Michael Lynton and Amy Pascal said to employees in an internal memo. "But it's being done in the context of a strategy designed to help us safeguard our competitiveness and chart our own course through these troubled waters."

The memo said the growth of online piracy is among the culprits for the massive layoffs, which will largely occur in the United States, particularly in home entertainment and IT.

Over the past 13 months, Hollywood has been rocked by a series of layoffs at the major studios. During a two-month span from December 2008-January 2009, Disney-ABC TV cut 400 jobs, Warner Bros. axed 800 employees, Paramount slashed some 100 jobs and NBC Universal shed 500 staffers worldwide.

Monday's move comes on the heels of a record 2009 at the box office for Sony.

Still, the memo said, Sony must take the necessary steps to get through the economic downturn affecting the entertainment industry.

Pascal, who appeared in a video message on the employee website, said the studio is going through a painful time. "Our industry is affected by two things: it's affected by the economy, of course, and it's affected by technology. ... Over the last two years, it's changed people's DVD buying habits, which has had a huge effect on our company and the industry at large."